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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W

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TAGS: [GH](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: GHANA'S MUSLIM LEADERSHIP REMAINS NEUTRAL ON GAZA

Classified By: POLCHIEF GPERGL FOR REASONS 1.4 b&d

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. A trio of socialist organizations, backed by the Palestinian Embassy, is planning a demonstration on January 15 during which they will present a petition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urging the GOG to take firm action against Israel. Ghana's National Chief Imam was approached by demonstration organizers and asked to lend his support. He sent an emissary to the US Embassy to ask for our perspective on Gaza. It appears that the Chief Imam will take a neutral position and will not have his followers take part in the demonstration. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On January 12, Embassy received a press statement issued by the Embassy of the State of Palestine which called on the international community to put pressure on the Israeli government to cease its aggression on the Palestinian People. Later that day, Poloff received a call from Major Sanda Ahmed, our primary interface with the National Chief Imam's office. He said that the Chief Imam had received a similar press statement from the Palestinian Embassy, except that his condemned the United States and its support of Israel. He further stated that a demonstration was being planned for January 15 and the organizers were asking for the Chief Imam's support. He said the Imam had asked him to contact us to gain our perspective. According to local press reports, the demonstrators include "a coalition of forces opposed to the Israeli aggression in Gaza." The groups participating are the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Socialist Forum of Ghana, and the Association for Pan Islamic Co-operation.

¶3. (C) Poloff met on January 13 with Major Ahmed and outlined in general terms the US position on Gaza, drawing on guidance provided by the Department. Poloff emphasized that the USG respected the Chief Imam's right to his own determination on participation and did not plan to interfere in any locally organized demonstrations, hoping only that they would be peaceful and lawful. Ahmed said that the demonstration was actually being organized and backed by the Palestinian Embassy, and that he felt there was Iranian influence behind this action. He said he was very familiar with the US position, but wanted to come to assure the Chief Imam that he had touched base with the Embassy. He also noted that the Palestinian statement was one-sided and failed to take Hamas to task for its part in the conflict. (NOTE: Major Ahmed served twice in Lebanon with Ghanaian Peace-Keeping Forces, and said we was "well aware of the excesses of both sides." END NOTE)

¶4. (C) Ahmed said that he was certain that the Chief Imam would not be showing any support for the planned demonstration, and would not issue any statement until after the demonstration had taken place. He also assured Poloff that the Imam's statement "would be balanced," since he (Major Ahmed) would be the author.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Ahmed said that while the demonstration is taking place on Thursday morning, both he and the National

Chief Imam plan to be attending the Embassy-sponsored 2nd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Award ceremony at the residence of the DCM. We are pleased that the Chief Imam will not support the demonstration. His position on the issue reflects the Mission's long-term efforts to build a strong relationship with him and his staff.

TEITELBAUM